Expansion of Bhuntar Airport

623. SHRI VIRENDRA KATARIA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to expand the Bhuntar Airport, Kullu to facilitate the landing of 50 seater aircraft and what is the present status of the Bhuntar Airport;

(b) whether it is a fact that very high Air fare i.e. Rs. 3900 is charge on New Delhi—Kullu sector by private airlines which is affecting the Kullu tourism;

(c) whether there is any proposal to fix reasonable and affordable air fares for the promotion of tourism; and

(d) whether there is any proposal to introduce Indian Airlines flight in this sector?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) Runway at Bhuntar airport can sustain operation of Dornier-228 type of aircraft. The airport cannot be expanded for operation of 50 seater aircraft, due to the river Beas, at one end and hills and steel bridge on the other side of the approach to the runway. The state government have been requested by Airports Authority of India to identify alternate land for the construction of a new airport for operation of B-737 type of aircraft.

(b) and (c) Airlines charge fares depending on their commercial judgement and economic viability.

(d) At present, Indian Airlines has no proposal to introduce flights to Kullu die to non-availability of aircraft capacity.

Proposal to take action against national Airport Authority and Private airlines

624. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM:
SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the CBI has registered case against the officials of National Airport Authority for leasing out NAA land in Bombay and causing loss to the exchequer;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether Government propose to take action against the involved National Airport Authority officials and against the owner of private airlines; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The case is under investigation of the CBI.

Proposal to open our skies to Global competitors

625. SHRI S. PETER ALPHONSE: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to open our skies to Global competitors;

(b) if so, will it not be detrimental to the interest of Indian Airlines and Air India which were developed at the cost of national exchequer; and

(c) what is the change of circumstances that necessitated the opening of our skies to multinationals when Government had decided against such a decision on 1st April, 1997?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) to (c) In accordance with the policy on domestic air transport services approved in April, 1997;

1. Foreign equity upto 40% and NRI/OCB investment upto 100% would be permitted in the domestic air transport services.

2. Equity from foreign airlines will not be allowed, directly or indirectly, in the domestic air transport services.

3. The existing companies operating in the domestic air transport sector in which equity is held by foreign airlines, directly or indirectly, will be advised to disinvest equity held by foreign airlines within a period of six month.

There is no proposal, at present, to change the said policy.